

1. (Once Amended). A system for placing and maintaining anchored conversations within an artifact, comprising:

an application configured to access the artifact;

a conversation client configured to access said anchored conversation and to receive communications regarding a portion of the artifact;

an anchor configured to identify a location within said artifact with which said conversation client is associated; and

a conversation coordinator configured to maintain a relationship between the anchor, the conversation client and the anchored conversation.

2. The system according to claim 1, wherein said conversation coordinator and said conversation client are separate applications linked together by communications such that said conversation coordinator directs initiation and positioning of said conversation client.

3. (Once Amended). The system according to claim 1, wherein said communications received by said conversation client are persistent and accessible via said conversation coordinator.

4. (Once Amended). The system according to claim 1, further comprising:  
a database configured to store conversations received by said conversation client;  
wherein said conversation coordinator is further configured to allow a user access to any current or previous conversations stored in said database.

5. The system according to claim 1, wherein:  
said conversation coordinator comprises,  
a request handler configured to receive conversation requests from a requesting conversation client, and  
a client mechanism configured to initiate a recipient conversation client having an anchor position, application, and artifact equivalent to the application, artifact, and anchor position of the requesting conversation client.

6. The system according to claim 5, wherein said request handler includes an approval mechanism that identifies whether an intended recipient of the conversation request approves entering into an anchored conversation.

7. The system according to claim 6, wherein said approval mechanism includes an id device that identifies all participants of a conversation to the intended recipient.

8. The system according to claim 5, wherein:  
said client mechanism comprises,  
a startup mechanism configured to initiate a target application associated with a conversation request received by the request handler;  
a retrieval mechanism configured to retrieve an artifact associated with the conversation request and load the retrieval artifact into the target application;  
a connection manager configured to establish a communications link with the requesting conversation client and the recipient conversation client; and

an anchor device configured to locate and attach the recipient conversation client to the equivalent anchor position in the retrieved artifact.

9. The system according to claim 8, wherein said anchor device is further configured to track a location of said equivalent anchor position, and position a user interface of the conversation client to within a predetermined proximity of the anchor if a position of the anchor is moved.

10. The system according to claim 8, wherein said anchor device comprises:  
an attachment device configured to maintain a position of the conversation client relative to the corresponding anchor;  
an unattach device configured to disassociate the position of the conversation client from a corresponding anchor; and  
a reattachment device configured to re-attach a detached conversation client to the position of its corresponding anchor.

11. The system according to claim 8, further comprising:  
a database configured to store communications between conversation clients; and  
a conversation retrieval mechanism configured to retrieve previous communications from the database that are associated with the requesting conversation client and load the retrieved previous communications into at least the recipient conversation client.

12. The system according to claim 11, wherein:

said connection manager establishes a connection that connects said database to the initiated conversation client so that said database is a silent participant that logs any conversations participated in by the initiated conversation client into said database.

13. The system according to claim 1, further comprising:

a database mechanism configured to store conversation information of the conversation client in a database.

14. The system according to claim 13, wherein said conversation information includes a history of at least one of a location in the artifact of an anchor corresponding to the conversation client, and communications between the conversation client and another client.

15. The system according to claim 1, further comprising:

an API mechanism configured to initiate at least one target application and load an artifact into the target application; and

an anchor device configured to anchor a conversation client to one of the artifact and an anchor of the artifact.

16. The system according to claim 15, wherein said API mechanism includes at least one application control device configured to direct operations of at least one target application via a target application programming interface.

17. The system according to claim 5, wherein said conversation coordinator further comprises a synchronization device configured to notify a user of the recipient conversation client if the artifact associated with the recipient conversation client becomes out of sync with a master document.

18. The system according to claim 17, wherein said synchronization device includes an activatable input mechanism by which a user may activate a synchronization process to update the out of synch artifact.

19. The system according to claim 17, wherein said conversation coordinator further comprises an update mechanism configured to update the artifact based on changes to the master document.

20. The system according to claim 17, wherein said master document is the artifact of the requesting conversation client.

21. The system according to claim 5, wherein said conversation coordinator further comprises an anchor identification mechanism configured to identify other anchored conversations in the artifact of the recipient conversation client and one of highlight, grey, and make invisible each identified anchor based on a predetermined access/privacy setting.

22. The system according to claim 1, wherein said conversation coordinator comprises:

a client mechanism configured to initiate a conversation client; and

an anchor device configured to position the conversation client relative to one of said application and an anchor of said artifact.

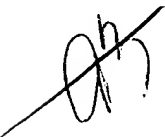
23. The system according to claim 1, wherein said conversation coordinator further comprises a messaging device configured to receive messages from said application.

24. The system according to claim 23, wherein said messages include at least one of an anchor position, invocation of an anchored conversation, and adding an anchor.

25. The system according to claim 1, wherein said conversation coordinator includes a communications device configured to route communications, from the conversation client to a communications network, and from the communications network to the conversation client.

26. The system according to claim 25, wherein said communications device is an IRC client configured to pass and retrieve communication to an IRC network.

27. The system according to claim 1, wherein:  
said conversation coordinator includes a database mechanism configured to connect a remote database as a silent participant to the conversation client.

 28. (Once Amended). An anchored conversation support device, comprising:  
a placement mechanism configured to place an anchor at a selected position within an artifact of an application; and

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an action device configured to recognize actions taken by a user with respect to the anchor and activate routines configured to implement the actions taken.

29. The device according to claim 28, wherein:  
said anchor comprises an ActiveX component inside an in-line shape; and  
said action device includes a set of routines each associated with at least one corresponding of said user actions and initiated by said ActiveX component.

30. The device according to claim 29, wherein said routines are macros defined within said application.

31. The device according to claim 28, wherein said actions comprise at least one of adding an anchor, moving an anchor, deleting an anchor, and activating an anchor.

32. The device according to claim 28, wherein said action device includes an application conversation interface comprising a set of application programming interface extensions configured to communicate said user actions to a conversation coordinator configured to respond to implement said user actions.

33. A system for invoking anchored conversations having artifacts of applications as a context, comprising:

an application conversation interface (ACI) having an application access mechanism that allows access and manipulation of application operations of each of the said applications; and

an anchor mechanism configured to identify and attach a conversation client to a selected anchor position in an artifact.

34. The system according to claim 33, wherein said conversation client comprises a communication client capable of any one of text, sound, graphic, tactile, video, and other communication mediums.

35. The system according to claim 33, further comprising:  
a conversation coordinator configured to,  
receive initiation requests from an application,  
initiate a conversation client to be anchored at an anchor position associated with the initiation request, and  
send anchored conversation request for initiating an anchored conversation client at a recipient host having a same application, artifact, and anchor position as the requesting conversation client.

36. A method of initiating and coordinating anchored conversations, comprising the steps of:  
receiving a conversation request from a conversation client anchored in a master artifact;  
and  
initiating an anchored conversation with the requesting conversation client.

37. The method according to claim 36, wherein said step of initiating an anchored conversation includes the steps of:



sending a conversation invitation to an intended recipient of the conversation request;  
receiving an invitation response from the recipient;  
initiating a synchronous anchored conversation with the recipient if said invitation response is affirmative; and  
initiating an asynchronous anchored conversation with the recipient if said invitation response is not affirmative.

38. The method according to claim 36, wherein said step of initiating an anchored conversation comprises the steps of:

starting an application corresponding to the master artifact;  
retrieving and loading a copy of the master artifact into the invoked application; and  
anchoring a recipient communications client at an anchor point corresponding to an anchor point of the requesting conversation client.

39. The method according to claim 36, further comprising the step of:  
maintaining the initiated anchored conversation.

40. The method according to claim 39, wherein said step of maintaining the anchored conversation includes the step of:

changing contexts of said anchored conversation when an anchor position of said anchored conversation is moved to a different application or artifact.

41. The method according to claim 39, wherein said step of maintaining includes the step of:

ending said conversation by shutting down each conversation client based on a request and/or action by at least one participant of the conversation.

42. A method of managing anchored conversations, comprising the steps of:  
placing an anchor in an artifact of an application;  
linking the anchor to a set of anchored conversation implementation routines; and  
managing an anchored conversation based on user actions affecting said anchor.

43. The method according to claim 42, wherein said step of managing comprises the step of initiating at least of said set of anchored conversation implementation routines based upon at least one of said user actions affecting said anchor.

44. The method according to claim 43, wherein said user actions include at least one of invoking an anchor, deleting an anchor, and moving an anchor.

45. The method according to claim 43, wherein said step of managing comprises the step of:  
calling an outside conversation coordinator to implement a function required by said user actions.

46. The method according to claim 42, wherein said set of anchored conversation implementation routines are at least part of an API of the application.